



Paul J. Diodati
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

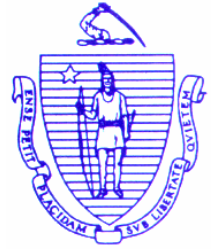
Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, MA 02114

(617) 626.1520

Fax (617) 626.1509



MASSACHUSETTS BOATING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM

Overview

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries is administering the U.S Department of the Interior's Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program. The BIG Program, begun in 2001, is a two – tiered program, paid for by money from the Sport Fish Restoration Fund which in turn is funded by a small percentage of the Federal Gasoline Tax – an amount which represents fuel purchased by boaters across the nation. The Sport Fish Restoration Fund has financed many projects which have helped people enjoy our state's aquatic resources over the years. They include hundreds of publicly owned launch ramps; the Clean Vessel Act, which pays for pumpout stations; and the latest effort, BIG, which will encourage those who own larger, non – trailerable boats that cannot use launching ramps, to travel from port to port in Commonwealth waters. This program is designed to provide grants to upgrade or install facilities for transient recreational boats 26 feet or more in length at public or partnered private facilities.

The program is a reimbursement grant, meaning that payments are made upon the submission of invoices for work accomplished. If selected for an award, applicants must provide at least a 25% match for Federal funds received. All payments will be based on 75% reimbursement of invoices from work completed. The federal regulation on BIG can be viewed in its entirety at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) Website:

<http://federalasst.fws.gov/Big/big.html> under the heading, "Boating Infrastructure Grant Program Final Rule – PDF".

The first stage, **Tier I**, is limited to about \$100,000 per year per state, but has the advantage of using a more streamlined regional approval process. The Massachusetts Program has attempted to fund as many qualified projects as possible each year under Tier I. In 2003, 2004, and 2005, three Tier I projects were approved; in 2001/2002 and in 2006 two projects were approved; and 2007 funds will be distributed to as many applicants as possible for the environmental upgrade and expansion of transient moorings. Proposed projects filed under **Tier II** can be much larger in scope than those in Tier I. Unlike the latter, Tier II proposals are judged in a nationally competitive process based on a strict point system. A separate document, the Massachusetts BIG Program Guidance document, includes a list of the types of projects that are eligible for funding under the BIG Program. Projects will have to go through all the standard permitting processes (federal, state, and local) that they would be obliged to do for any privately or locally funded project.

Application Process

When submitting an application to the BIG Program, please use this format. Include descriptive paragraph(s) for each of the following:

1. Need: State why the facilities are needed or need improvement.
2. Objective: Provide a concise statement of what the project will accomplish in terms of the stated need.
3. Expected Benefits and Results: **All proposed work must directly benefit transient boaters operating vessels 26 feet and larger.** Identify, and to the extent feasible quantify, the recreational user benefits or other user benefits to be provided as a result of this project. Proposed user fees must be described.

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Mary B. Griffin, Commissioner

4. Approach: Describe how the work is to be done and how environmental safeguards and innovative technologies will be employed to avoid and/or minimize impacts to fisheries resources and habitats. Formal plans are preferred but are not required at this time; however, clear illustrations will be needed for review purposes.
5. Budget Summary: Include a breakdown of project costs including project design, permitting, construction, and supplies.
6. Location: Identify the specific project location. Include a USGS topo map, NOAA harbor chart, or internet digital map – like Google Earth, showing the location.
7. Compliance: Features proposed under the BIG Program cannot cause damage to the environment nor to historic features and cannot restrict access. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that their proposal will comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations and policies including, but not limited to,:
 - a. the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
 - b. the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA),
 - c. the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZM),
 - d. the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 through consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO),
 - e. and, if the scope and nature of your project requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) to be completed, it will be the grantee's responsibility to have the EA prepared and approved.
8. Permits: State whether any state or federal permits been obtained. If no permits have been issued, how quickly can they be obtained? What review thresholds will be triggered?
9. Match: Identify local means of funding. Match must account for a minimum of 25% of project costs.
10. Other Information: Name, address, phone number, e-mail address, etc. for the project contact person.

Submissions are accepted for review and possible inclusion in our state's annual grant application until September 15th of each year. In order to determine which projects will be forwarded to the Department of Interior as part of the Commonwealth's grant application, all submissions are evaluated by an agency review committee for completeness and for how well they meet program criteria. Applicants will be notified if their project was not selected at the State level to go to the Federal level.

Award Process

States are generally notified in January of each year of grant awards. *Marine Fisheries* will in turn notify remaining applicants of the award status. Please keep in mind that if your project is selected for funding, funds will not be available before the state/federal process is fully completed. Applicants cannot start a project until they receive notice of the award and enter into formal agreement with *Marine Fisheries*. No reimbursement will be given for any work performed prior to entering into a formal agreement with *Marine Fisheries*. The formal agreement is a document signed by the grant recipient and the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries that includes a Scope of Work, Standard State Contracts, Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, and Federal Statement of Assurances. Additionally, no reimbursement will be given for any work performed prior to receipt by *Marine Fisheries* of a signed grant agreement letter from the USFWS. *Marine Fisheries* will facilitate the grant agreement with the USFWS and will maintain that paperwork. Any costs incurred prior to the full execution of these agreements are the responsibility of the applicant and will not be reimbursed by *Marine Fisheries*.

Marine Fisheries will send the applicant a copy of the completed agreement along with a formal letter granting permission to proceed with the project contingent upon receipt of all necessary regulatory permits. Approved projects can be expected to begin once all agreements and regulatory permits are in place. Work must be completed within 3 years of project approval.

For additional information, please feel free to contact Stephanie Cunningham in our Gloucester Office at (978) 282-0308 x 133 or at stephanie.cunningham@state.ma.us.